

02/08/2006

## New scanner tests for drink and drugs at work

*An eye scanner designed to discover if employees have taken drugs or drunk heavily is being launched in Ireland and Europe amid growing concerns over testing in the workplace.*

Businesses could soon be making use of a new eye test which can tell if workers are under the influence of drink or drugs. The scanner, which measures the pupil's reaction speed, can test for alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, heroin and other narcotics. It can even detect workers affected by tiredness.

The Eye Check Pupilometer, a US invention, resembles a pair of binoculars linked to a computer. It works by flashing a green light into the pupil three times. The scanner cannot distinguish between alcohol and drugs, so use of the equipment would be followed by a swab or urine test.

The €15,000 machine, which is being distributed in Ireland by *Barenco Creativity Security Solutions*, is the latest addition to a growing armoury of measures to monitor employees. The makers claim it is the first device which measures 'impairment' rather than analysing urine or swabs for drugs, and is therefore less invasive.

But the new test, which takes just four minutes, is likely to cause concern among human rights groups about 'Big Brother' style monitoring of employees lifestyles outside the workplace. Workplace testing has increased concerns over the rights of workers, who could be sacked for what they do in their leisure hours.

The human rights group Liberty in the UK said drug screening for jobs requiring top performance such as airline pilots was acceptable but not where the safety factor was lower. But Industry groups say such testing is an important element to monitor health and safety.

There is no legislation regarding workplace drug-testing at present. Most of the testing is at the pre-employment level. The main sectors that are testing are transport, Military, Pharmaceuticals, IT and Call Centres. Many of the companies using WDT have the parent company in the US. The Irish prison service is currently accessing the benefits of the Pupilometer.

It is estimated that around 5% of companies already use some form of employee drug testing but a Mori survey in the UK earlier this year found that another 10 per cent expected to introduce checks within 12 months.

For further information on the Pupilometer, you can go to:

[www.mcjeyecheck.com/index.htm](http://www.mcjeyecheck.com/index.htm)